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Congress Extends Temporary Unemployment Program

OLYMPIA – The Washington State Employment Security Department is working to help claimants who will benefit from President Bush's decision today to approve legislation that extends temporary unemployment benefits to jobless workers nationwide.

The bill approved by Congress and the President resumes Temporary Extended Unemployment Compensation (TEUC) benefits, which provides additional federally funded benefits to claimants whose regular state unemployment benefits run out.

The federal program lapsed on Dec. 28, but most of the approximately 44,000 Washington claimants whose TEUC benefits ended at that time were transitioned without a break in payment to other benefit programs. Those claimants, as well as others who did not qualify for alternative benefit programs, will be automatically transitioned back to TEUC to collect the remainder of the benefits they were eligible for.

The new legislation will have the following effects:

- It extends the previous TEUC program through May 31, 2003, and provides retroactive payments for any missed weeks between the expiration of the program on Dec. 28 and its reauthorization.
- In most states, the bill provides up to 13 weeks of TEUC. But Washington, Alaska and Oregon residents qualify for a second 13 weeks of benefits called TEUC-X, for a maximum total of 26 weeks. TEUC-X is available in states with high unemployment rates.
- Unemployed workers who exhaust their regular benefits will be able to file TEUC and TEUC-X claims through the week ending May 31, the new program end date. New TEUC claimants will receive application instructions.
- *The bill does not increase benefits for individuals who have already used up their TEUC and TEUC-X eligibility.* However, some of those workers will be able to receive benefits through other state and federal programs.
- The bill provides a "phase-out" period for individuals who have not exhausted TEUC benefits by May 31. They will be able to continue to make claims and receive payments on the existing balance through Aug. 30.
- Claimants who have exhausted their 13 weeks of TEUC benefits before May 31, will be able to draw TEUC-X benefits for up to a total of 26 weeks or until Aug. 30, whichever comes first. But those who exhaust their 13 weeks of TEUC benefits after May 31 will not be eligible to collect TEUC-X.
- *No new TEUC or TEUC-X claims can be made after May 31.*

The legislation does not affect other unemployment programs in Washington, including Extended Benefits. Extended Benefits became available in Washington a year ago as a result of the state's sharply increased unemployment rate. It provides up to 13 additional weeks of additional benefits, although most claimants receive nine weeks after regular, TEUC, and TEUC-X benefits are exhausted. Funding for these benefits is split between states and the federal government.

The state's WorkSource centers provide resources to help people in their search for work. For locations and a searchable job database, see the WorkSource Web site at <http://go2worksource.com>. For more information about TEUC and Extended Benefits, visit <http://go2ui.com>.

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News Media: More information about TEUC and Extended Benefits is available on Employment Security's Web site at <http://www.wa.gov/esd/AgencyInfo/news.html> and at <http://go2ui.com>.